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ABSTRACT

Educational issues were studied as related to women in one visible minority population in the Vancouver area--recent immigrants from the Punjab state in India. The 10-month demonstration project involving 13 participants is analyzed in terms of five research topics: participation in the program, Punjabi-English biliteracy, classroom instruction and learning, long-term impacts of ESL literacy acquisition, and public information materials that affect their use among program participants. An effort was made to provide culturally relevant instruction and then assess it for its wider use. Curriculum decisions were made by the instructor in consultation with students, researchers, and an advisory committee. Among the findings were that: (1) participation in the program was influenced by length of residence in Canada, family roles and support, knowledge of English, expectations for further education or work, and awareness of Canadian institutions; (2) uses of English and Punjabi literacy were differentiated according to social action domains; and (3) learning was affected by language code, self-control strategies, personal and social knowledge, and social experience. Appended are a list of the advisory committee and three Punjabi-English usage charts. Contains approximately 100 references. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education) (LB)

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Learning ESL Literacy among Indo-Canadian Women

Final Report

Submitted to the Multiculturalism Sector, Department of
the Secretary of State of Canada, June 1991

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1 Purpose of This Report, and Related Publications

This document reports final analyses from the demonstration project, "Learning ESL Literacy among Indo-Canadian Women", funded by the Multiculturalism Sector, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada through a grant to Dr. Alister Cumming over 1989-90 at the Department of Language Education, University of British Columbia. An earlier progress report on the project was submitted to the Secretary of State in October, 1989 outlining the logistical organization of the instructional program, characteristics of the participants in the instructional program, and the project's approaches to teaching, curriculum, and data collection.

The present report describes findings for five questions (outlined in preliminary form in the 1989 progress report) central to the research aspects of the project:

1. Participation in the Present Program. What motivated these women to participate in the present program of ESL literacy instruction? What factors facilitate or constrain their involvement in learning English and literacy formally? How might these factors be addressed in education or social policy?
2. Punjabi-English Biliteracy. How are participants' uses of literacy differentiated across Punjabi and English? What are the implications of this differentiation for social and educational policy?
3. Classroom Instruction and Learning. What kinds of knowledge do participants use in classroom settings to construct the processes of acquiring ESL literacy? What implications arise for other ESL literacy programs?
4. Long-term Impacts. What are the long-term impacts of ESL literacy acquisition on participants' lives? What changes are evident in individuals' lives over the 6 month period of instruction, as could be attributed to improved language and literacy? Do these impacts warrant investment of educational resources in this kind of instruction?
5. Public Information Documents. What features of existing instructional and public information materials facilitate and/or constrain uses of these resources among program participants? What principles might be proposed to assist community service workers and educators in preparing printed materials (e.g., information pamphlets) which are accessible to individuals with limited ESL literacy?

Some information related to these research questions has already appeared in published papers and conference presentations. Articles on the project to date include:

- an account of the project's curriculum rationale (Cumming, 1990a);
- analyses of participants' uses of English-Punjabi biliteracy and implications for adult literacy curricula (Cumming, 1991a);
- analyses of factors affecting the women's participation in formal ESL literacy instruction (Cumming & Gill, 1991a); and
- analyses of participants' classroom learning processes and long-term achievements in ESL literacy (Cumming & Gill, 1991b).

Conference presentations of these papers have been made provincially at the Annual Convention of B.C. Teachers of English as an Additional Language (B.C. TEAL) in Vancouver in 1989 and in 1990; nationally at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Council on Multicultural and Inter-cultural Education (CCMIE) in Ottawa in 1990; and internationally at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Chicago in 1991. Findings from the project are also being synthesized with other related research to describe problems of adult immigrants to North America gaining "Access to Literacy" (Cumming, 1991c).

2 Context of the Project

The present project aimed to gather and analyze information to understand better educational issues related to the situation of women among one visible minority population in Vancouver, Canada--recent immigrants from the Indian state of the Punjab--to develop and assess appropriate approaches to assist in their learning of English and of literacy, and to make recommendations of a more general nature, based on findings in the one case, for educational and social policy to serve this particular population in the future. The project took an "action research" approach to a complex set of socio-educational problems: many local adult education programs were perceived as inappropriate for Indo-Canadian women, and their participation in such programs was evidently constrained (Burnaby, 1989; Cumming, 1991b; Jackson, 1987; Selman, 1979), Indo-Canadian women's access to social services and work opportunities appeared limited locally (Jackson, 1987; Perrin, 1980; Thompson, Sanghera & Mroke, 1986) as well as generally in Canada (Anderson & Lynam, 1987; Belser et al. 1988; Belfiore & Heller, 1988; P. Cumming, Lee, & Oreopoulos,

1989; Jenkinson et al., n.d.; Seward & McDade, 1988), and demographic trends showed a large, disproportionate population of immigrant women, a figure almost double that of males, who speak neither English or French accumulating in B.C. (Cumming, 1991b) and nationally (Boyd, 1990; Pendakur & Ledoux, 1991; Seward & McDade, 1988).

The "action" taken was to create an educational context which made significant efforts to provide culturally-relevant instruction for a small number of Indo-Canadian women then to assess its processes and outcomes in case study fashion--as a "demonstration" of possible educational practices and as a means of revealing situational constraints on their access to literacy. This approach follows initiatives reported for Hispanophones (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Moll, 1989; Moll & Diaz, 1987), native Hawaiians (Au et al., 1986), and Haitians (Auerbach, 1990) in the U.S. as well as various other minority cultures internationally (Auerbach, 1989; Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988). Particular concerns in the present project were (a) creating an instructional environment suitable to the situations and characteristics of one distinct minority population not usually served by conventional adult education, (b) documenting participants' efforts to teach and learn a second language and literacy concurrently in classroom settings, and (c) assessing the impact of language and literacy acquisition on participants' lives.

2.1 Literacy and Adult Minority Populations

Little systematic research has addressed issues of learning, instruction or social adaptation among adult immigrant populations needing to acquire literacy and the majority language in industrialized countries despite long-standing recognition of this complex educational situation in Canada, the U.S., and Europe (Bell, 1990; D'Anglejan, Renaud, Arseneault, & Lortie, 1984; Hornberger, 1989; Klein & Dittmar, 1979; Penfield, 1986; Perdue, 1984; Richmond, Kalbach, & Verma, 1980; Wallerstein, 1983; Weinstein, 1984). Recent educational inquiry on this topic has advocated approaches which are sensitive to the local situations of particular ethnic populations--given the diversity of cultural, linguistic, and contextual factors which obtain and interact in any one circumstance (Auerbach, 1989, 1990; Burnaby, 1989; Dubin, 1989; Giltrow & Colhoun, 1989; Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1989).

Moreover, considerable attention has focused on the need to distinguish relations between language acquisition, literacy acquisition, and cultural adaptation among such populations--factors which would appear to vary with other variables such as cultural values, linguistic differences, institutional structures, ethnic attitudes, or literacy in the mother tongue (Bell, 1990; Cumming, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Fishman,

Riedlerberger, Koling & Steele, 1985; Giltrow & Colhoun, 1989; Hammond, 1989; Hornberger, 1989; Klassen, 1988; Mastai, 1980; Sticht, 1988; Wallerstein, 1983; Weinstein, 1984). Virtually all of this previous research has charged that general programs of ESL literacy instruction are inadequate to serve the needs of many specific immigrant populations (cf. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990; Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991). However, very little of this research has been able to demonstrate precisely how educational practices or policy should be organized to resolve this dilemma.

2.2 Women, Literacy, Culture, and Language

For immigrant women, problems of literacy learning, language acquisition, and cultural adaptation often combine with demands to maintain household and diverse family responsibilities, preserve traditional cultural roles, and work to supplement a family income. Such demands suggest specific needs for adult education and social services, needs which have largely gone unacknowledged in policy and research, despite recent efforts to address these needs in certain case studies (e.g., Rockhill, 1990; van Dijk, 1990), instructional materials (e.g., Barndt, Cristall & Marino 1982; Warren, 1986), orientation materials (e.g., Jenkinson et al., n.d.; Thompson, Sanghera & Mroke, 1986), and more general syntheses of sociological or educational information (e.g., Boyd, 1990; Stromquist, 1989).

Such efforts have generally pointed toward the distinct barriers to social participation imposed upon immigrant women who may have limited literacy and proficiency in the majority language, who emigrate from societies with cultural values which differ visibly from the host society, who live within minority populations with strong tendencies to preserve their ethnic heritage, religion, and traditions, and who are primarily charged with responsibilities for child care and household tasks within a home environment. These factors appear especially critical among populations in Canada such as first generation Sikh immigrants from the Punjab, who in Gibson's (1988) terms have accommodated well to North American society with very little cultural assimilation, or in Balakrishnan and Kralt's (1987) term have formed visibly segregated populations within certain Canadian cities, and for whom limited literacy and traditional cultural roles among women are prevalent trends in the country of origin (Rao, 1979; Stromquist, 1989).

2.3 Local Context

The present project addressed the situation of Punjabi women in Vancouver, Canada, where a large Sikh population from the Indian state of the Punjab has established itself (numbering

about 26,000 within the greater Vancouver area; 1986 Census) in recent decades while retaining many cultural practices and values. The area of Vancouver selected for the project had a concentration of over 3,000 people whose mother tongue is Punjabi, forming about 18% of the total population of 17,000 in this one sector of the city (City of Vancouver, 1989). This working-to-middle class neighbourhood has visibly accommodated the Indian culture, as evidenced by numerous ethnic stores and services, but is also the site of local ethnic tensions (Cumming, 1991b; Robson & Breems, 1985). Although little direct information on the composition of the local population is available, data from local surveys (Cumming, 1991b; Perrin, 1980) and the 1986 census of Canada (Cumming, 1991b; Pendakur & Ledoux, 1991; Seward & McDade, 1988) suggest this Punjabi-Canadian population could be expected to contain about twice as many women as men who do not speak English, the majority of whom might have had only five to twelve years of schooling in India before immigrating to Canada, have possessed few distinct occupational skills, and have landed in Canada over the past decade to enter "arranged marriages" with husbands already residing in Vancouver.

3 Approach

Bilingual ESL literacy classes and child care services were offered free of charge two afternoons per week over six months (September 1989 to March 1990) to Punjabi-speaking women at a non-profit agency with an established reputation for community service in the neighborhood. Eighteen women volunteered at the start of the program; among them, thirteen women were judged to form a relatively homogeneous class with limited English proficiency and limited literacy in their native Punjabi. Five women were excluded from participation because they had virtually no English proficiency and very limited literacy in Punjabi or they were Hindi (rather than Punjabi) speakers. Of the thirteen volunteers who started the ESL literacy classes, nine continued for four months, and six completed the duration of the program. Attrition was due to family relocations, participants taking full-time employment, and one severe illness.

All participants initially responded to a television interview with the course instructor (Raminder Dosanjh, herself an immigrant from the Punjab who usually taught ESL at a local college) aired in Punjabi on a local multicultural channel, although newspaper, poster, and radio notices were also used to publicize the project. Each participant provided informed consent for the research in response to a tape-recorded and written protocol describing the project in Punjabi and English. Community involvement in the project was obtained through an advisory committee with representatives of thirteen educational and service agencies working with the adult Indo-Canadian population in the city (See Appendix A).

3.1 Participants

The 13 participating women used Punjabi as their dominant language in almost all home and social situations, were ages 23 to 31, had spent 3 to 13 years in Canada, had completed 9 to 12 years of school in India, had 1 to 3 children, had husbands employed as laborers or technicians who had lived in Canada most or all of their lives, and had annual family incomes of \$19,000-\$66,000 (including income from family businesses). None of the women had previously taken formal courses of any kind in Canada, despite their lengthy periods of residence. Several of the women held part-time jobs in janitorial, restaurant, packing, or agricultural work, though none were skilled positions. All of the women indicated they wished to improve their English literacy in order to gain more personal independence, interact with the majority society, and obtain further education or "clean" work (e.g. clerical or sales jobs). All indicated they had no more time to devote to English or literacy studies than about six hours per week of classes because of responsibilities to immediate and extended families and part-time work. The majority brought pre-school children to the classes, having no other means of relieving themselves of child care responsibilities. Two Punjabi-speaking child care workers were employed over most of the duration of the project.

Initial assessments showed these women spoke English with very limited proficiency ($\bar{X}=1.5$ on a scale of 4) (e.g., very restricted vocabularies, accents which interfered with comprehension, difficulty maintaining conversations), were able to write short phrases in English but hardly able to compose extended texts, and read with limited comprehension in their mother tongue ($\bar{X}=46\%$, s.d.=15.2 on a text recall task, compared to a sample of 5 Punjabi translators, journalists, and teachers who scored $\bar{X}=81\%$, s.d.=4.1). Correlational analysis of the initial assessments showed a moderate relation between the women's years of residence in Canada and their ESL proficiency ($r = .6$), indicating those who had resided longer in Canada tended to have more proficiency in English. But no correspondences emerged between the women's English proficiency and their literacy skills in Punjabi ($r = .2$), their years of schooling in India and levels of Punjabi literacy ($r = -.2$) nor ESL proficiency ($r = -.4$), nor their Punjabi literacy and period of residence in Canada ($r = .3$).

No claims can be made that these volunteer participants represented the larger population of Punjabi women immigrants in Vancouver. But their profiles do suggest these women were characteristic of the adult female population in Canada which demographic studies have indicated are especially in need of ESL literacy education (see Boyd, 1990; Cumming, 1991b; Pendakur & Ledoux, 1991; Seward & McDade, 1988).

3.2 Curriculum

Curriculum decisions were determined by the instructor in consultation with students about their interests and perceived learning needs, along with some input and feedback from the researchers and advisory committee. (Cumming [1990] describes the curriculum rationale in detail.) Units of study focused on libraries, public health services, banking services, children's schools, and job search strategies, each forming periods of approximately one month of content-focused instruction (in a manner akin to Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989's notion of "theme-based" language teaching). Instruction used aspects of reciprocal modeling (Brown & Palinscar, 1989) and cooperative inquiry (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) in various reading, writing, and conversation tasks related to the curriculum themes, including frequent visits by guest informants and field experiences. This approach was supplemented by more conventional ESL exercises developed or chosen by the instructor from existing materials. Readings and other literate tasks (such as pamphlets, newspaper articles, forms, letters) were mostly contributed by participating students or gathered during field experiences at relevant institutions. Classes were taught primarily in English, supplemented by some Punjabi for explanations of terms or concepts or peer-group identification (much in the same manner as Guthrie & Guthrie [1987] describe for Chinese-English bilingual classes).

3.3 Data Collection and Analyses

All classes were documented through participant-observation by one of the researchers (Jaswinder Gill, who is female, bilingual in Punjabi and English, and a second generation Indo-Canadian), producing written records of all classroom events as direct transcriptions of selected spoken interactions, observational records made during classes, or reflective accounts after tutoring groups of the students or teaching occasional classes. This approach combined methods of classroom observation (Breen, 1985; Chaudron, 1988) and narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These data were analyzed impressionistically to establish generally how students and the instructor collectively constructed the process of literacy and language learning.

In addition, all participants were interviewed individually at the start of the program, at three intervals of two months over the period of instruction, then again four months after the period of instruction. These interviews used a fixed schedule of open-ended questions and self-reports of frequency of reading and writing a comprehensive range of text types in Punjabi and English (adapted and extended from Griffiths & Wells, 1983).

Responses to the interviews were tape-recorded in Punjabi, transcribed and translated into English, and then coded with a second coder (97% agreement on a randomly selected 10% of the data).

4 Participation in the Present Program

What prompted these Indo-Canadian women to participate in the present program of ESL literacy instruction? What factors facilitate or constrain their involvement in learning English and literacy formally? How might these factors be addressed in education or social policy?

The women's decisions to participate in the classes at this time related to a complex set of facilitating and constraining factors including their length of residence in Canada, current economic positions, family roles and support, knowledge of English and literacy, expectations for further education or work, and awareness of educational and other public institutions in Canada. These factors interacted with features of the ESL program which was designed particularly for this population: an instructor from the same ethnolinguistic community and gender, on-site child care services; use of Punjabi for administrative and explanatory purposes in the classes; study of topics relevant to participants' life experiences (e.g. health care services, job search strategies, children's schools); and an environment of peers of common gender and backgrounds in their local neighborhood.

These issues are especially important in view of remarks made frequently to the project workers that the Indo-Canadian female population was among the most difficult "to get to come out to ESL or literacy classes" and the fact that the present women had resided in Canada for an average of seven years before entering formal programs of adult education. As such, we consider the present thirteen women to represent the "cutting edge" of larger populations of immigrant women whose circumstances lie precariously between being able or not able to participate in formal education in Canada.

4.1 Length of Residence

At first the baby was too young and I did not really know too much about Canada. I was busy getting settled and learning about things, and I was getting used to my husband and his family.

A major factor in the women's decisions to participate in the present program was their length of residence in Canada. Unlike the stereotype of the "newcomer" to North America, who might seek language training shortly after arrival, these women had lived in Canada for an average of seven years (a range of 1 to 13 years) and almost equivalent periods of marriage. During this period of initial settlement the women saw their priorities as organizing a new home life, getting to know a husband and his family, and raising at least one child to school age. After having established a sense of security in their home/lives and family routines, these women then reached a point where they could begin to consider their personal development, individual social circumstances, and future opportunities. As for many women in the developing world, education was perceived to be a luxury after family and other household priorities had been met (Rao, 1979; Stromquist, 1989).

4.2 Economic Positions

I told my husband about the other classes, and he said I should take them. I told him about the fees, but this was not a problem. He doesn't worry too much about expenses. I have a visa card, and he tells me I should use it. There are no problems with money or transportation. I just need to take more classes.

Economic stability also facilitated the women's decisions to participate in language classes. Their husbands' work was prospering under a local economic boom, yielding average family incomes of about \$40,000, slightly above the mean for the local area and the province. All but two of the women's families owned their own large, well-furnished, modern homes (at an average value of \$250,000) and had one automobile. The two women with lower family incomes were the only two who had been in Canada less than five years; they lived in rented basement suites. Unlike the other eleven women, their husbands had immigrated to Canada with them and had not yet had time to establish businesses or well-paying work. At the start of the research, only one of these women worked on a regular basis, although during the progress of the program, three of the women took full-time jobs--out of personal choice rather than economic necessity. Even though course fees were not charged for the present program, all but two of the women insisted they had sufficient financial resources to pay fees for other courses.

4.3 Family Roles and Support

My father-in-law sometimes says that I should take care of the baby now, then take classes when she is older. But my husband doesn't mind. He wants me to study more

so that I can carry my own weight. It is really up to me.

Traditional family roles exerted a major influence on the women's decisions to participate in the classes as well as their capacities to study at home or to interact with the majority society. All of the women reported that their husbands and husband's families had greater control over their personal lives than they had themselves, a conventional situation in the patriarchal society of their country of origin. Expectations or commitments to child care, extended families, and visiting relatives consumed most of the women's time, making studies for more than two afternoons per week all but impractical. Likewise, their husbands assumed responsibilities for most family financial tasks, major purchases, and institutional interactions, further restricting the extent and quality of interaction that the women had with the majority society.

Interestingly, the majority of these women (including the six who completed the program) had husbands who had lived in Canada or England for more than ten years prior to the women's immigration, and most of these men had been educated in British or Canadian schools. Correspondingly, the men's attitudes toward their wives' personal situations appeared more progressive than may be typical of more recent Indo-Canadian immigrants. All of the women said that their husbands supported and assisted them in their language studies, most wanted their wives to take on more responsibilities for family businesses or household tasks such as banking or shopping, and some volunteered to look after their children if their wives enrolled in evening classes. At the same time, however, the husbands' familiarity and contacts with Canadian society implicitly reduced the women's needs to leave their homes or to interact with English-dominant institutions or services. Moreover, several of the women noted that their husbands sometimes teased them about the value of their further education as it was a process conventionally reserved for males.

Two other factors within their home situations may have also influenced the women's participation in the program. First, only one of the women actually lived with her extended family (father-in-law and mother-in-law), a situation which would be conventional in India and for many immigrant women in Canada. This situation reduced the obligations that most of the women may otherwise have had to attend regularly to their husband's family members. A second factor was that most of the women had children who were in public school or were about to start. This circumstance created pressures to communicate with their children's teachers, incentives from children to read to them or talk about their school activities, and assistance from the children with the women's studies in English (see Ghuman [1980] for similar examples in British contexts). The women's school-age children proved to be quite fluent in English, regularly communicating with their fathers and peers in English. Homes with

school-age children had considerably more English reading material than the homes of women with only younger children.

Arranging suitable child care was the major constraint that the women reported on their not having attended any kind of formal education previously in Canada. All of the women with young children said they were not willing to leave their children in a day care center or with a baby sitter who was not an immediate family member (i.e. mother or mother-in-law) while they attended classes. The program employed two Indo-Canadian child care workers throughout the duration of the classes, who looked after six children on average in a room adjoining the women's classroom. This arrangement apparently satisfied the six mothers, who saw on-site, culturally-appropriate child care as a necessary requirement for their continuing participation in the classes.

4.4 Future Employment Prospects

I need to speak enough to get a good job. I want to find a good job, not doing dirty work as a janitor or in a kitchen. If I'm going to work, it has to be worth my while. I'm not going to leave my children for a minimum wage job.

The women's personal aspirations for improving their English literacy were to gain greater individual independence, obtain meaningful employment, and to further their education through job-training programs. Most of the women had worked at part-time laboring jobs in the past, such as packing, dish washing, or janitorial work. However, none of the women wished to continue with this kind of "dirty" work at irregular hours, given their financial security and family priorities. Although the women did not articulate specific career or vocational goals, they were aware of the instrumental value of proficiency in the majority language for career opportunities (Gardner, 1985) as well as the potential economic advantage of knowing the majority language (Richmond, Kalbach & Verma, 1983).

4.5 English Literacy and Contact with the Majority Society

In the stores I can ask for things, things that I would not ask about before. Now I talk to people in line-ups. I used to get really shy and say simple things like yes or no. Before I used to say so little on the phone. I'd just get a name and a number from the people calling my husband. Now I try to get a complete message and write it down.

At the start of the program, all the women's lives were remarkably restricted to interactions in Punjabi in their homes and with their immediate families. All of the women were able to speak and read some English to a very limited extent, i.e. brief conversational exchanges with restricted vocabularies and conspicuous accents and grammatical errors. None of the women had any English-speaking friends or regular acquaintances. Only one woman reported speaking occasionally to a neighbor in English, the woman who was working said she sometimes spoke to the security guard or representative of the contracting company at her janitorial job, and several others said that people sometimes spoke to them in English on the street about their babies. Their informal contacts with the majority society, however, varied considerably from one woman whose husband did all of the family grocery shop and banking to another who did all of her family's shopping and her own banking. In terms of mobility, ten of the women had a driver's license and regular use of a car; two women obtained their learners' permits during the progress of the program, an achievement they considered would have a major impact in reducing their sense of isolation and dependence on others.

As the women improved their English literacy over the duration of the program, their self-confidence visibly increased, reinforcing their commitments to language studies and greater personal independence. As reported below, the women's frequency of reading in English, communications with their children's schools, and use of the telephone in English increased dramatically from about once per month at the start of the research to almost daily ten months later. The women's lack of familiarity with public institutions and services in Canada was a particularly conspicuous aspect of their limited integration into the majority society. As the ESL classes introduced the women to local libraries, public health and employment services, banking routines, and schooling, their knowledge and use of these facilities also increased (see section 4 below).

4.6 Program Supports

I feel okay because the teacher knows my language and customs, and the other women in the class are doing the same thing as me. I can practice speaking and reading English, but I can ask questions in Punjabi and get an answer. Now I am ready to try other classes.

The women's decisions to participate in formal education at this time were also shaped by several features of the particular program of ESL literacy instruction provided, features which were not available in other ESL or literacy programs locally, making other such programs virtually inaccessible for the women. As noted above, a principal program support was on-site child care by other Indo-Canadian women. Of equal importance was

instruction from an experienced teacher who was a member of the women's ethnic community, cognizant of their social situations, willing to accommodate their initial, traditional expectations for teacher-centered instruction, and able to communicate with them in their mother tongue when necessary or appropriate for administrative purposes or clarification. All of the women also remarked that the location of the ESL literacy program in their neighborhood was another factor which prompted them to attend these classes.

The content of the curriculum was also perceived to be relevant to the women's intentions as its major topics were developed in consultation with participants and involved orientation and field experiences to local community services such as libraries, public health, banking and employment services and children's schools; functional conversation skills and strategies; and reading of newspaper articles, public information brochures, and stories linked to the women's personal concerns and interests. A final program support was the solidarity of studying with other women in similar circumstances and from common ethnic backgrounds. In sum, the women considered these factors to be appropriate to this initial phase of their participation in education in Canada, although such program supports obviously served only a "bridging function", a preliminary step toward more extensive participation in other forms of adult education and functions within the majority society.

4.7 Implications for Educational and Social Policy

These analyses indicate that gender and ethnicity are fundamental considerations to be accounted for in conceptualizing motivation to learn a second language as well as language program curricula and policies for adult minority populations. In particular, more contextually-grounded research is needed to refine current notions of "motivation" and "accessibility" to language and literacy instruction, since these notions are currently formulated in terms which are largely irrelevant to the situations of immigrant women. For example, theories of participation in formal adult education (e.g. Tinto, 1975; Stage, 1989) have sought generalizations for majority populations in reference to their withdrawal from formal programs. Consequently their data fail to account adequately for minority populations and not at all for people not already engaged in formal education.

Likewise, theories of the motivation to study second languages have been framed largely in reference to the schooling of majority language children or adolescents, particularly for the learning of languages not spoken in the local community (e.g., Gardner, 1985, 1988; Dornyei, 1990), or in reference to linguistic features appearing in adult immigrants' speech (Klein

& Dittmar, 1979; Perdue, 1984; Schumann, 1978). Although some theories have begun to account for the influences of social milieu, intergroup relations, and ethnic vitality on the language acquisition of immigrant populations (Bourhis, 1990; Clement & Kruidenier, 1983; Edwards, 1985; Giles & Byrne, 1982; Richmond, Kalbach, & Verma, 1983; Schumann, 1978), little documentation exists to describe how adult immigrants experience these processes personally, how these processes vary with specific cultural groups, or how they relate to educational policies (Crookes & Schmidt, 1989; Giltrow & Colhoun, 1989; Schmidt, 1983).

To simply generalize motivational factors for all immigrant populations alike, as in most current educational policies in Canada, implies ignoring fundamental factors in the present group of women's capacities to participate in language education, particularly their family roles, instrumental motivations for contact with the majority society and to pursue employment opportunities, and period of residence needed to establish home routines, economic stability and settle into North American society. Similarly, policies for adult language education which fail to account for these factors in the form of culturally-appropriate child care, bilingual instruction, and relevant curricula would effectively prohibit the present group of women access to such education. Given these constraints, little wonder that demographics show the immigrant male population in Canada acquiring the majority language far more rapidly and extensively compared to the immigrant female population (Boyd, 1990; Cumming, 1991b; Seward & McDade, 1988).

The factors identified above conform to Spanard's (1990, pp. 340-341) summary of affective and situational barriers which generally prevent access to programs of higher education: institutional barriers (location, schedules, fees, campus "friendliness"), situational barriers (job commitments, home responsibilities, lack of money, lack of child care, and transportation problems), and psycho-social barriers (attitudes, beliefs, and values; self-esteem; opinions of others; and past experiences as a student). However, virtually all of these barriers take on a unique quality for the present population by virtue of the women's gender-determined roles within their families, particular ethnic values, and minority cultural status in the local community. At the same time, this case study provides a useful counter-example to certain notions commonly guiding most educational programming for adult language instruction: that immigrants' motivation to learn a majority language occurs in the initial years of settlement, that opportunities to acquire such a language will occur spontaneously through informal contact with the majority society, and that language training should take a generic-skills approach which is not sensitive to the cultures or situations of specific populations.

5 Punjabi-English Bilingual Literacy

How are participants' uses of literacy differentiated across Punjabi and English? What are the implications of this differentiation for social and educational policy?

To a great extent, the women's uses of literacy in English and Punjabi were differentiated according to the domains of social interaction in which they usually engaged, although mixing of the two languages existed in several domains. To understand this differentiation, one needs to consider not only the women's uses of literacy in their social routines but also their attitudes toward both languages, the status of these languages locally, and the women's gender roles and socio-economic positions. With these factors in mind, implications for educational and social policy can be suggested for this one population, although other combinations of these factors among other minority language populations probably create different policy implications for other immigrant groups in Canada (e.g., see Giltrow & Colhoun, 1989's analysis of Mayan-Canadians in Vancouver; Klassen, 1988's analysis of Hispanophone Canadians in Toronto; Mastai, 1980's analysis of Israeli-Canadians in Vancouver).

5.1 Domains of Literate Language Use

Specific information on the women's uses of literacy across English and Punjabi for particular literate tasks in their daily lives are displayed for reading tasks in Appendix B and for writing tasks in Appendix C at the point where the project's classes finished (March 1990). For comparison over the one-year period of the research, Appendix D shows how the women's frequency of using English literacy changed from the start of the program (September 1989), to the completion of their classes (March 1990), then four months later (August 1990). Analyses of these long-term changes depicted in Appendix D are discussed under section 4 below.

The women most frequently read in English, with the distinct exception of religious texts which were read in Punjabi. English reading dominated most personal (e.g. letters), commercial (e.g. advertisements), and public information (e.g. newspapers) domains, but the women also read in Punjabi frequently in these domains and in some instances (e.g. information brochures and notices) with equal frequency in both languages. In contrast, their writing was more distinctly situated in English, although the women wrote much less often than they read. When they did write in Punjabi, it was mostly as letters to family or friends or as notes to themselves. Their writing in English was mainly

formulaic (signatures, forms, lists, notes) except for diaries or poems which several individuals wrote privately.

Overall, the distribution of these uses of biliteracy formed separate domains for religious purposes and relations with immediate and extended family in Punjabi, whereas the women performed wider communications most frequently in English and secondarily in Punjabi. This differentiation conforms to a framework proposed by Goody (1986) which suggests that literate uses of language develop and are demarcated in relation to major social institutions, such as religion, commerce, the state, and the law. Goody's typology can be extended to include the domains of family and education on the basis of research on uses of bilingualism in such domains among Hispanophone minorities in the U.S. and Canada (Fishman, Cooper & Ma, 1971; Klassen, 1988; Sanchez, 1983).

Within this framework, the present women's uses of Punjabi literacy can be said to apply mainly to the home and religious domains along with some uses for commerce. Their English literacy was reserved for commercial and educational domains along with some family interactions (e.g. in reference to their children's schools). It is worth noting, however, that at the start of this project these women had almost no literate interactions with the state or the legal systems, no prior interactions with educational systems in Canada (except indirectly through their children), and surprisingly few commercial literate interactions in either language. This pattern reveals a distinct social isolation--embodied in the women's limited literacy and English proficiency but reflecting their general confinement to household and family domains of activity.

5.2 Attitudes towards the Languages and Literacy

An original intention of the project was to alternate instruction in English and Punjabi on separate days to assess the transfer of literacy learning across languages. However, it quickly became apparent that the participating women wanted to focus their studies on acquiring literacy in English by practicing spoken English during the classes; they had little interest in developing their Punjabi literacy beyond its present state. Consequently, plans for Punjabi literacy instruction were abandoned, although spoken Punjabi was used to facilitate specific instructional tasks in about 10% of class time throughout the project (much in the same manner as Guthrie & Pung Guthrie [1987] document for a Chinese bilingual classroom in California--see section 3 below).

Initial interviews with the 18 women who initially registered for the instructional program made clear that their main intentions for improving their literacy and English were to

interact more extensively with the English-speaking population in Vancouver, to perform specific tasks independently in English (e.g. banking, major purchases, interact with their children's schools), and either to obtain employment requiring more English literacy (i.e. not menial labor) or to enter English-medium training programs which would enable them to upgrade their employment qualifications. All felt that their existing Punjabi literacy based on their schooling in India (ranging from 9 to 12 years) was sufficient for their present life circumstances. In regards English literacy, the women expressed far more interest in improving their reading and functional conversational vocabulary rather than writing.

All the women stated their desire to move out of life routines in which they were essentially bound to their homes and family obligations, routines which occurred almost exclusively in Punjabi. Acquiring greater literacy in English was perceived to be a means to achieve this goal. Developing greater Punjabi literacy, conversely, would have implied elaborating the very social roles of housebound wives and mothers that these women wished to move away from. In this regard, the acquisition of English literacy held a social esteem distinct from Punjabi literacy, and English was associated with the domain of education, making equation of the two languages as objects of instruction all but impractical.

5.3 Gender Roles and Socio-economic Positions

Much of the women's interest in developing their English literacy can be attributed to their situations as mothers who had raised at least one child to school age, who after numerous years in Canada felt they were now settled in this country, and whose husbands had worked themselves into comfortable earning positions in established jobs. Having reached their mid 20s and early 30s and established a successful family life, these women wished to develop their English literacy as a means of gaining greater personal independence. The women reported they felt that their lack of English literacy restricted their capacities to partake in family financial tasks (which were mostly performed by their husbands), to communicate with their children's schools, to obtain employment which did not involve "unclean" manual labor, and to know how to make use of available social services (such as they studied in the classes, e.g. health care units, libraries, employment centres, and community support groups).

5.4 Status of the Minority and Majority Languages

The women's attitudes about learning literacy in English and Punjabi were also shaped by the status of these languages locally and in their society of origin. English not only represented the

language of business, work, higher education, and wider societal interaction locally; it fulfills such diglossic functions in many domains in India as well. In addition, the integrity of these women's Punjabi was well-maintained within their home environments and local neighbourhood, a situation somewhat akin to the well-established, minority status of Punjabi and Sikh culture in India. As Gibson (1988) puts it for Sikh Punjabi populations in California, North American English language and society can be accommodated without assimilation. Or in Cummins & Swain's (1986) terms, developing biliteracy in English was perceived to be additive rather than subtractive for these women as the loss of Punjabi literacy was not implicated in this situation--although it may have been for subsequent generations in Canada (Pendakur, 1990). In these respects, the position of first generation Indo-Canadians in Vancouver probably differs substantively from other minority language groups who seldom use English for communication in their society of origin (e.g. Spanish, Japanese) or for whom print literacy in the native language is not prevalent in the native society (e.g. Hmong, Athapaskans).

5.5 Implications for Educational and Social Policy

The foregoing analyses suggest several implications for educational and social policy. As numerous previous studies have concluded for other populations, limited literacy and proficiency in a majority language can greatly restrict the participation of immigrant adults in domains of social activity beyond their home and family domains, a problem which is greatly exacerbated for immigrant women with children and other family responsibilities. To promote such individuals' interactions with fundamental social domains like as social, legal, and educational systems, translation of documents into the native languages of immigrants is probably necessary, at least to facilitate orientation to and initial understanding of the organization of these domains and available services in Canada. Over the longer term, however, educational provisions to promote acquisition of literacy in the majority language are also needed to foster fuller understanding and social participation which is not restricted by language barriers.

Several recommendations to enhance the quality of such education arise from these analyses. First, these analyses suggest the importance of adult ESL curricula which teach to relevant domains of literacy such as commercial interactions, employment opportunities, social services, and educational systems. Second, although literacy in the mother tongue may be an important determinant for acquiring second language literacy (Cumming, 1989; Cumming, Rebuffot & Ledwell, 1989), and may be a relevant educational goal for populations like Hispanophone North Americans to maintain contacts with their native cultures (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Klassen, 1988; Moll & Diaz, 1987),

acquisition of literacy in the mother tongue may also be perceived as an irrelevant (even constraining) goal alongside literacy instruction in the majority language for other populations, particularly women wishing to gain greater access to the majority society and thus greater personal independence. Curriculum decisions about the language of instruction in ESL literacy programs need to be made in reference to such complex socio-linguistic factors, rather than simply stated as general policies regardless of cultural background and gender.

6 Classroom Instruction and Learning

What kinds of knowledge do participants use in classroom settings to construct the processes of acquiring ESL literacy? What implications arise for other ESL literacy programs?

Documentation of the six months of classroom interaction showed the focus of participants' attention alternating between five general aspects of knowledge: language code; self-control strategies and schematic representations for text production and comprehension; personal knowledge; social knowledge; and social experience. Most literate tasks performed in the classes visibly combined several of these aspects of knowledge in recurring routines while shifting attention between each aspect of knowledge depending on instructional, situational or learning emphases, individual knowledge lacks, or personal interests. These five kinds of knowledge represent a broad, impressionistic account of the aspects of language and literacy which the present students and instructors cooperatively choose to concentrate on as their means of learning. As such, these five aspects may represent basic elements of literate knowledge in a second language and culture, but their qualities were probably influenced in unique ways by the common cultural background of the participating students and teacher as well as the innovative curriculum.

6.1 Language Code

Considerable attention in the classes focused directly on the language code of English (and sometimes Punjabi), particularly for the identification and comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary. Students' queries about readings usually highlighted particular words or phrases they did not know, although some attention was also devoted to other aspects of the language code such as syntactic or morphological patterns or spelling. The instructor and students frequently collaborated in questioning routines about the meaning of words or phrases aimed at comprehension of a text, as in the following sequence

reviewing a permission letter to attend a school concert brought home by one of the women's children. The mother brought the letter into the classes because she was unable to understand it, e.g., originally thinking that her child was going to perform a concert rather than attend one. Students had been asked to prepare comprehension questions for one another in one of their first efforts at Brown & Palincsar's (1989) technique of reciprocal modeling:

Instructor: What does attend mean? / /

Student 1: To perform.

Instructor: To perform or watch?

Student 2: To watch.

Student 3: That students are going to watch.

Student 4: Who is going to attend?

Several students: The students.

Instructor: Who is going to perform?

Several students: The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Student 5: What will they do at the Orpheum Theatre?

Student 6: The students will be attending this concert.

Student 5: What is the total cost of attending?

Student 6: The total cost is \$5.00.

Instructor: Is that right?

Students scan text, not responding.

Student 1: Do you think this show is expensive?

Student 6: What?

Student 1: Do you think this show is expensive?

Student 6: This show is worthwhile. (reading inappropriately from text)

Student 1: Do you think this show is expensive?

Student 6: Excuse me?

Student 1 explains in Punjabi, emphasizing that \$2.50 is very cheap.

Student 7: What does subsidize mean?

Students are silent as they scan the text.

Instructor: [Student 1] should know the answer. She looked it up in the dictionary.

Student 1: Subsidize means to pay something.

Instructor: To pay.

Student 1: Part of. To pay part of the fee. Subsidize means to pay part of the fee.

Instructor: How do you say it in Punjabi?

Student 1 explains in Punjabi.

Although attention in this sequence focused on the meaning of individual words in English, as well as practice of question and answer patterns, the students and instructor alike appeared to use this focus to build up a piece-meal interpretation of the text. In van Dijk & Kintsch's (1983) terms, the participants frequently attended to verbatim representations of individual words while trying to construct propositional representations of ideas in the text as well as an overall situational representation of the text's purpose and context (see Cumming, Rebuffot & Ledwell [1989] for related findings on individuals reading in a different second language context). At the same time, participants appeared to be rehearsing simple patterns of verbal interaction and to be using their common mother tongue as a supportive means of reference and verification.

6.2 Self-control Strategies and Schemata for Reading and Writing

At other times, attention focused less on the language code and more on self-control strategies and schematic representations for interpreting or producing texts, i.e., skills more conventionally associated with textual literacy. All students had a basic facility with the script of English, could write simple letters or descriptions, and decode the language while reading; but most lacked higher-order skills for planning, self-monitoring, knowledge integration, or forming schematic representations of texts (e.g., as described in Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). In group readings, for instance, Jaswinder's tutoring prompted several students to structure more global interpretations of an information pamphlet explaining the functions of the Vancouver Public Health Unit:

I work with the first group on the first paragraph. This is by far the simplest part of the pamphlet, and

right away it is obvious that the students are starting at the level of individual words, e.g. what does this mean? I ask the students to use diagrams to help them, but they are not sure where to start. I offer a few leading questions, e.g. who works in the health unit? One student reads out the names of the personnel, although she doesn't know a few of the terms, e.g. speech pathologist, therapist, nutritionist. I mention that it is important to get the main idea about the personnel structure of the Health Unit. I ask her to draw a box with the Health Unit in the center and to add all the people who work there. I tell her to add only the ones that she and her partner know. They are able to write 5 or 6 familiar terms. With the remainder, I encourage them to guess what they could be. Slowly, with probing questions, they are able to come up with 3 or 4 more (nutritionist, speech pathologist, therapist). They seem to be able to guess by the context and decoding the roots of the words. Once this is done, I ask them to guess what the word "network" is in the paragraph. One student labels the diagram "network" and says, "this is a network, a group of people and services". We go through the same procedure with the second paragraph on the services offered at the Health Unit. The students draw a diagram of this then try to guess the meanings of new words. After they finish the second paragraph, the instructor asks them to put the diagram on the blackboard and explain what the pamphlet says. They seem to do this quite well. The other groups had gotten bogged down with vocabulary again.

A focus on self-control strategies often occurred while students were writing extended texts. The two following sequences again show Jaswinder working with individual students while they composed brief reports on a field trip they had taken to the local public health unit. In the first sequence, attention focuses on students' knowledge to plan and elaborate details in a manner appropriate to a formal written register. The second sequence focuses on strategies for monitoring and diagnosing one's own written text. In both sequences, the personal tutoring and questioning follows the sort of "apprenticeship" approach which Rogoff (1990) suggests characterizes much language and literacy acquisition in childhood.

Two students have difficulty elaborating on a topic. I have to ask a lot of questions to get them to think in this way. For example, Student '2 has written, "The Health Unit program for seniors". I ask what kind of programs. She responds, "homemaker and special classes". I ask what kind of classes. She says, "about health care". I ask, what else? She says there were others but she can't remember. After a few

seconds she says that they have a program at the community centre for Indian seniors. Each time I ask her to note these down for her outline. We go through this with each topic and eventually she expands her outline. At this point it is obvious that this kind of writing is new for both students. They don't have a conceptual framework of what a report should be, what to include, or how to organize it.

One student finishes her draft of the report early and asks me to go over it with her. My main impression is that she has made a coherent report but there are many simple spelling and agreement errors. She reads each sentence to me then looks to me to see if there are any errors. I ask her to look herself, but rarely is she able to pinpoint any errors. Then I isolate the phrase where I think an error is. Almost invariably she is able to point to and correct the error herself. Once it is isolated it is fine, but she doesn't seem able to identify it herself in her own writing.

6.3 Personal Knowledge

Other aspects of the classroom instruction and learning involved associating knowledge in written texts with knowledge that the students already possessed personally. The participating women were, of course, individually knowledgeable, but little of this knowledge was situated in reference to reading or writing. For example, they were unaccustomed to using writing to document and assess their experiences or to use reading as a means for obtaining and analyzing information. As shown in the following discussion around a newspaper article on arranged marriages among the local Sikh population, the learners sometimes found themselves unable to understand phrases while reading that they otherwise knew from personal experience. Moreover, much of their process of gaining literacy in these situations appeared to involve learning how to talk about their ideas and experiences in relation to written passages (see Wells, 1990):

Instructor: Do you have any questions about that?

Student 1: Green light? What does green light mean?

Instructor: At a street corner, what color are the traffic lights? What does the red light mean?

Student 1: Stop.

Instructor: And the green light.

Student 1: To go.

Instructor: And here, who is going to decide on the marriage? Who will give the green light?

Student 1: The father will decide.

Student 2: To shop around?

Student 3: The father will look around for a wife.

Instructor: What do you think about this sentence? How do you feel. I have some strong feelings. How about you?

Student 1: It is okay.

Student 2: It sounds a bit strange. (in Punjabi)

Student 3: He is saying he has no respect for women. (in Punjabi)

Instructor: It makes women sound like something you buy in a shop. It is like buying and selling.

Student 4: He wants to find a woman to walk behind the man. Like in a wedding. (In Punjabi) He wants a "servant" to his sons. (In Punjabi) He doesn't care about the woman.

6.4 Social Knowledge

Considerable attention also focused on knowledge of social institutions and practices associated with them, demonstrating the extent to which language and literacy are organized in relation to specific cultural domains (Goody, 1986; Street, 1984; see also Auerbach, 1989; Klassen, 1988; Weinstein, 1984). Like other immigrants to a new society, and despite their relatively lengthy residence in Canada, these Indo-Canadian women were unfamiliar with many of the literate practices, assumptions, and values organized around common public institutions in Vancouver. This was evident in virtually all of the field experiences organized for the classes, which took the women to seemingly commonplace agencies relevant to their lives but in which they had never before been. The two following accounts record Jaswinder's surprise at the extent of this unfamiliarity, first in regard to public schools then in regard to literate practices associated with obtaining employment:

The instructor went over the idea of a field trip to a school. I was surprised by how little any of them knew about schools in Canada. Only two of them had ever been inside of one, and they had only been to parent-teacher conferences once with their husbands. They did

not know what classrooms looked like nor what different things could be found in a school. They were all keen on the idea of visiting a school and being able to see a class. They decided it would be best to do this in pairs.

While talking with a few students after class I thought they would be interested in having their own resumes prepared. But this was not a priority for them. In fact during the class, they had paid little attention to the instructor's description of the model resume. No one took notes and most doodled or looked outside. I think this was jumping too far ahead for them. They were not sure of the purpose or necessity for a resume. None had ever seen one before or been asked to produce one. At this point they have difficulties even filling out the basic application forms for jobs. For example, they did not know what to put for categories like health, hobbies, or what to include from their own lives. It's a question of knowing the value and relevance of these for a work situation.]

6.5 Social Experience

An additional aspect of learning literacy in the second language and culture appeared to be experiential, actually performing literate tasks in relevant situations. For the most part, supportive, individual coaching was required to develop this aspect of knowledge as students independently engaged in tasks they had not previously conducted or for which they were unaware of certain implicit "rules" of appropriateness. This kind of learning necessarily had to occur outside the classroom in locations like banks, employment centers, and social service agencies because of the great number of unpredictable, associated circumstances and the need for individuals to integrate and practice relevant actions individually:

After the library tour, students go up to the counter in groups of threes to get their cards. Most of the students are eventually able to fill out the simple application form for the library card. Some have problems with words like "initial" and "signature". Some have considerable difficulty with the section on date of birth because they are asked to put "the month and day". Most enter the appropriate information but not in the appropriate places, i.e., in the boxes. Some write above the boxes and some underneath. I try to help by pointing out where they should locate their writing. It is clear that few of the students have ever filled out a form of this type.

6.6 Implications for Instruction

The accounts above expose the complexity of knowledge types and integration processes fundamental to literacy acquisition, a complexity which is seldom so visible among student populations that already possess knowledge of the language code, certain higher order skills for writing and reading, customs of talking about personal experiences in reference to texts, familiarity with local social institutions and practices, and experience using literacy in routine situations. A major dilemma for instruction was creating learning tasks that would integrate each kind of knowledge in a coherent, holistic way, given that the participating women needed to acquire most of this linguistic, literate, and cultural knowledge concurrently.

As a consequence, instruction and student performance in the classes tended to focus on only one or two of the relevant kinds of knowledge, neglecting others. This tendency seemed to reduce the complexity of learning into teachable or learnable units so they could be attended to, practiced, and consolidated. However, this process would often result in students merely displaying knowledge they already possessed, rehearsing simple question and answer routines, or engaging in other behaviors typical of traditional, teacher-centered instruction. In part, such behaviors seemed to follow from expectations for traditional classroom activity that participants transferred from their prior experiences in India, and thus were culturally-relevant. But the present documentation showed instruction to be more culturally-relevant to participants' immediate situations and learning purposes in instances when it attempted simultaneously to provide language explanation and practice, foster new literacy skills, build on personal knowledge, familiarize participants with relevant social institutions, and support them through tasks in real life situations.

Analyses of the processes of classroom instruction documented in this project provide a preliminary, impressionistic account of the complex aspects of knowledge addressed in instruction for adult ESL literacy: acquisition of the language code, self-control strategies and schematic representations for reading and writing, situating personal knowledge in reference to texts, social knowledge of institutional and cultural practices, and experiential knowledge performing literate tasks in relevant contexts (cf. Hornberger, 1989). Addressing all of these aspects of knowledge holistically poses a major challenge for instruction, even when they are approached through what Wells (1990, p. 398) calls a "transactional construction of understanding" between an instructor and learners. Above and beyond the need to treat literacy acquisition as "situated cognition" (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1989) emerges the problem of promoting individual learners' access to and integration of an extremely diverse range of linguistic, intellectual, cultural and

experiential knowledge (cf. Prawat, 1989)--and doing so in a manner which preserves their integral complexity while allowing each component to be attended to and practiced sufficiently to foster relevant learning.

Use of a micro-computer at the project site provided a telling example of how the women's emerging knowledge of ESL literacy needed to be approached in the sort of apprenticeship manner described in excerpts above. The computer proved most useful for purposeful tasks such as preparing individual resumes during the unit on job-search strategies. At first (as described above), the women saw little value in resumes or computer skills at all, since the social need for this kind of personal documentation and technical skill was not within their previous experience. And the computer technology posed considerable technical barriers for the women, as well as for the instructor in that only one student could work on the machine at a time. Consequently, students met individually during and after classes with Jasvinder, who first had each woman prepare a handwritten resume according to a format prescribed in classes. Then Jasvinder typed these into the computer, alongside the individual student-author, making refinements to the content and language, while questioning the person about personal details. As the completed resume was produced, the women took considerable interest and pride in the document, and eventually it became a discernable product of their integration of personal, cognitive, social, linguistic, and institutionally-relevant aspects of literacy. However, only a few students were willing or able to devote additional time to making further use of this medium; but when they did, it was apparent that a very considerable amount of individual coaching, interactive modeling, and practice was needed to support this kind of complex learning--an investment of time and effort for student and instructor alike which went well beyond the six hours per week of time allocated for classes.

7 Long-term Impacts

What are the long-term impacts of ESL literacy acquisition on participants' lives? What changes are evident in individuals' lives over the 6 month period of instruction, as could be attributed to improved language and literacy? Do these impacts warrant investment of educational resources in this kind of instruction?

Over the ten months of the project, the women's uses of English literacy in their daily lives increased distinctly, particularly in reading and other communications with educational, commercial, and social-service domains, as the women came to interact more with certain institutions in the dominant

society. These impacts were traced by comparing the women's frequencies of using English and literacy in their daily lives as reported in interview data (in reference to a comprehensive range of text types, reading and writing functions, and social situations) collected at two-month intervals over the period of instruction then four months after the classes were completed.

7.1 Uses of English Literacy

Appendix D shows the detailed data on uses of English literacy grouped, for ease of reference, into general categories of reading, writing, language uses in the community, and language uses at home. Group means are reported for three intervals: beginning of the classes, end of the classes, and four months after the classes were completed.

These data show the women's reading in English increased from about once per month at the start of the classes to several times per week at the end of the classes. Interestingly, after the period of instruction, this rate increased to almost daily for reading newspapers and other information sources such as advertising flyers, public notices, and mail, although the women's reading for pleasure and to study English dropped off considerably after the classes ended. Their uses of writing in English increased from a monthly to weekly frequency during the period of instruction, but this increase was mostly related to homework exercises and was not sustained after classes ended--with the exception of completing forms and signatures (mostly for commercial transactions or employment applications). No increases in uses of Punjabi literacy were recorded, although the women maintained regular uses of written Punjabi for religious purposes, to communicate with relatives, and in reference to local, Punjabi-language commercial and media materials.

The women's uses of English in the community increased substantially in several domains. The most distinct increase was in regards interactions with their children's schools, which occurred less than once per month at the start of the classes, increased to weekly during the period of instruction, then was reported to occur several times per week later on. A nearly comparable increase related to the women's uses of telephone communications in English, which increased to almost daily, although most of this communication involved taking messages for their husbands' businesses, since the women initiated their own calls only about once per week. Over the same period of time, the majority of women became regular users of their local library and public health unit. They reported using English more frequently in their daily routines, but they said their uses of English for shopping and banking functions did not change appreciably from a rate of several times per week over this period.

7.2 Indicators of Language Acquisition

Analyses were also conducted on written texts that the six women who completed the classes produced at the beginning and end points of the instruction. Composing, however, was not a major emphasis of the instruction as the women perceived it to have little functional value for their current social situations. The compositions chosen for comparison were descriptive narratives of personal experiences: (a) an account of how they came to Canada written in late September, 1990 ($\bar{X}$ number of words = 592) and (b) an account of their experiences in the ESL literacy classes written in late March, 1991 ($\bar{X}$ number of words = 418). As indicators of language acquisition, analyses were conducted on the women's uses of seven morphemes in these texts, following procedures used in numerous previous studies of second language acquisition (Ellis, 1986; Peyton, 1989).

For the two texts assessed, the women's uses of past tense markers improved from 23% to 52% accuracy, uses of regular plurals improved from 33% to 75% accuracy, and uses of articles improved from 50% to 79% accuracy. Uses of copula "be" decreased in accuracy from 80% to 64% but these structures appeared very infrequently in the later text. The three other morphemes, progressive "-ing", progressive auxiliary "be", and third person agreement, did not occur with enough frequency in either of the texts to warrant calculations (because most of the writing was phrased in the past tense and first person). Counts of words per T-Units in these same texts showed an overall increase from 6.8 to 7.6 words/T-Unit, indicating the women's control of written syntax tended to increase slightly over the six months of instruction.

7.3 Implications for Instruction and Policy

These findings indicate that the short duration of culturally-relevant English literacy instruction provided for these immigrant women had discernible impacts on their capacities to participate in certain fundamental domains in the majority society, to read more frequently for information in English, and to write with improved accuracy and control in English. The present findings are the only ones that we are aware of providing specific evidence of the effects of ESL literacy instruction on adult immigrants in North America. The general significance of the findings, however, must be tempered by the modest changes documented in the women's social uses of English and literacy and by consideration of the very small number of people who participated in this case study project, all of one gender, culture, and neighborhood.

Of particular concern for educational policy is the extent to which such a limited amount of instruction appeared to contribute directly to the women's increased interactions with their children's schools, reading for information in English, and uses of such public facilities as libraries and health units. The general value of the kind of instruction provided would appear to be as a necessary "bridging" step from non-participation in the majority society toward more formal kinds of adult language, vocational, or academic education, potentially leading to fuller social participation and personal independence.

8 Public Information Documents

What features of existing instructional and public information materials facilitate and constrain uses of these resources among program participants? What principles might be proposed to assist community service workers and educators in preparing printed materials (e.g., information pamphlets) which are accessible to individuals with limited ESL literacy skills?

Throughout the period of instruction, efforts were made to utilize public information documents wherever possible as reading materials related to the themes studied in the program's curriculum, as supplements to field and guest visits, and as teaching materials. The participating women consistently found these documents very difficult to comprehend, even in the cases of documents prepared to be easily readable, for adults with limited language proficiency, or for women seeking work in Canada (e.g. EIC, 1989). Indeed, the majority of the women reported during interviews that these reading tasks were the classroom activities with which they had the greatest difficulty (i.e., unlike newspaper articles, stories, writing tasks, etc.).

Substantive reasons for these difficulties are documented above (section 3) as the five aspects of literate knowledge which the women were in the process of acquiring and integrating. Public information documents typically presented a highly condensed form of written information which required each of these kinds of literate knowledge to be utilized concurrently to facilitate comprehension. Because of these complex socio-cognitive demands, this form of communication posed a visible barrier to the present women's understanding the significant information coded in this medium. Such difficulties also emerged with pamphlets and other documents which had been translated into Punjabi, suggesting that their literate characteristics (rather than the language code per se) were the source of comprehension difficulties, and that translation of such documents into non-

official languages may have limited value for populations without high levels of literacy.

8.1 Frequently Encountered Text Types

Most of the public information documents introduced in the classes would appear mundane and commonplace to educated, native Canadians. The text types posing difficulties included:

- information pamphlets (about community or social services, government programs, agencies, institutions, political campaigns, etc.),
- form letters (permission or information letters from schools to parents, employers' letters to employees or prospective employees, advertising letters, commercial letters, etc.)
- application forms (for employment, library registration, health services, school registration, driver's registration, banking services, etc.)
- orientation manuals (for appliances, government services, job-search strategies, health or safety procedures, local sites, etc.)

8.2 Difficult Aspects of Such Texts

An ERIC search of research on document readability showed most recent studies to be concerned with textual features of printed documents, using "readability formulas" of sentence complexity and vocabulary frequency linked to specific grade-level criteria. Although this conventional approach yields information related to some of the difficulties encountered by participants with printed documents in the present project, a broader approach to this issue is necessary, as suggested decades ago by authors such as George Orwell or Robert Graves and elaborated more recently in information-processing models of reading and text use (e.g. Waite, 1982; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983) or by advocates of "clear writing" (e.g. Battison & Goswami, 1981) or "considerate texts" (e.g. Armbruster & Anderson, 1988).

However, reading processes vary considerably on the basis, not just of texts themselves, but also with the knowledge of readers, social contexts, and social purposes for which texts are used. In particular, recent studies have demonstrated that document readability needs to be assessed in relation to specific social uses of written texts, for example, in contexts such as school letters written to parents (Mavrogenes, 1988), people's uses of social service information (Walmsley & Allington, 1982),

driver's handbooks (Palmer, 1986), or policies at specific work sites (Archambeault & Archambeault, 1983). Difficulties in reading texts cannot be presumed simply to arise from characteristics of printed materials in a general way, but rather from a complex interaction of factors in the use of texts in particular social contexts.

Intensive and longitudinal observation of the women in the present project indicated that they had so many pervasive problems comprehending virtually every kind of printed document they encountered or they brought into the classes that specific difficulties were hard to isolate, except generally in reference to the five aspects of literate knowledge outlined above in section 3 of this report: difficulties with the language code, self-control strategies and schematic representations for reading and writing, situating personal knowledge in reference to texts, social knowledge of institutional and cultural practices, and experiential knowledge performing literate tasks in relevant contexts. The sheer quantity and complexity of these comprehension difficulties, in fact, would suggest that alternative media, such as video tapes, picture stories, or personal tutorials could present more accessible ways of conveying important public information to this population than the conventional use of printed pamphlets, form letters, or orientation manuals.

8.3 Principles for Preparing Appropriate Public Information Documents

Nonetheless, data from the present project and other related research on text processing suggest principles which could be used to enhance public information documents for populations with limited literacy, proficiency in English, and knowledge of cultural institutions and practices in Canada:

1. familiarity with the language code: use point-form or telegraphic phrases presented in distinct categories; retain very simple sentences structures (in active voice, identifying subjects, verbs, and objects clearly in sentences); avoid all technical, specialized, or erudite terminology; avoid all idiomatic expressions; aim at about a grade 3 readability level but appeal to adult ideas and interests; refer consistently to visual images and schematic charts; provide glossaries of all specialized terms, using multilingual translations and ordinary examples
2. self-control strategies: guide readers through documents, providing step-by-step instructions, checklists, flow-charts, and summary points at frequent intervals; pose comprehension questions or true/false summary statements about main concepts, and provide answer keys; ask readers to pose key questions themselves; relate all information

directly to ordinary experiences of uninformed readers (and account for cultural variations in these experiences)

3. schematic representations: use charts, diagrams, pictures to depict all information appearing in verbal text--to the point of intentional redundancy; provide a preliminary outline of the structure of the overall information in the document; indicate clearly the purpose of the document in terms of what a reader should do with it, when, where, with whom, and why; highlight key concepts
4. situating personal knowledge in reference to texts: write from the perspective of uninformed users of the document; provide choices for readers with more or less knowledge of the topic; refer to ordinary personal experiences; make use of background knowledge of topics that readers already have; engage readers in sequential procedures while reading, like ticking off checklists or summarizing own ideas; do not presume that readers were brought up in Canada--account for cultural values, perspectives and differences
5. social knowledge of institutional and cultural practices: do not presume that readers know anything about the institution or situation; explain clearly the social purpose, functions of services or individuals, and relations of the document to relevant activities; make available people to explain the document on site through public tours, demonstrations, or to answer questions by phone; make comparisons to related situations or practices in other parts of the world
6. experiential knowledge performing literate tasks in relevant contexts: provide guided tours, public demonstrations, video-tape or in-person tutorials in reference to the document; incorporate readers' background knowledge through checklists, step-by-step sequences, questions, or summaries; refer to schematic charts or demonstrations throughout; help people to practice the ideas documented, not just read about them

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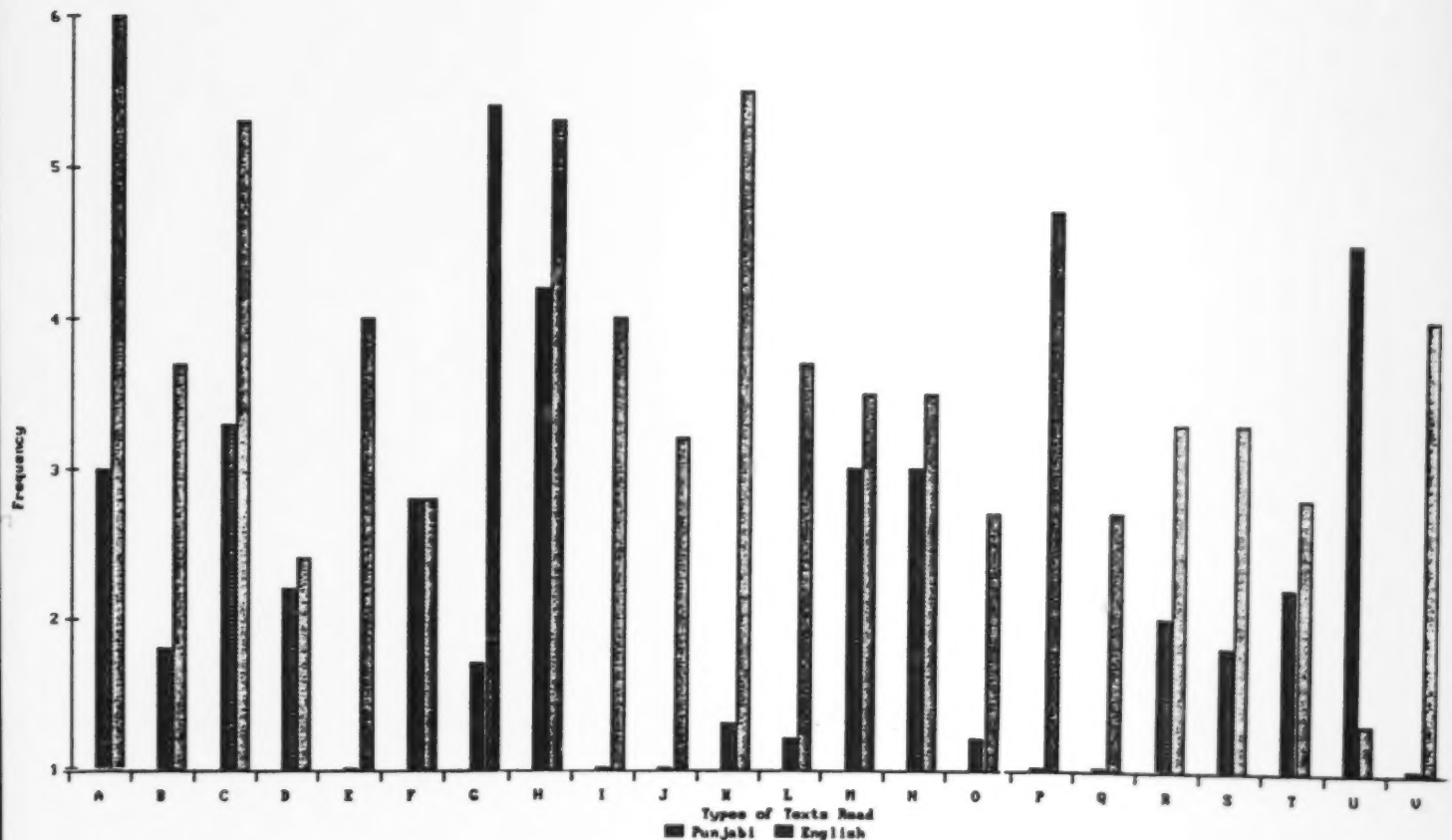
Appendix A

Advisory Committee

- Adult Literacy Contact Centre, Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. -- Mary Carlisle
- Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C. -- Diane Kage
- Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver -- Barbara Downs
- Columbia College, ESL Program -- David Jackson
- India Mahila Society -- Raminder Dosanjh
- MOSAIC, Service for Non-English Speaking Residents -- Michael Murphy
- Multicultural Health Program, Vancouver Board of Health -- Guninder Mumick
- Orientation Adjustment Services for Immigrants Society (OASIS) -- Harbans Grewall
- Vancouver Community College, ESL Program -- Robert Caldwell
- Vancouver SATH -- Sadhu Binning (Dept. of Asian Studies, UBC)
- Vancouver School Board, Career & Community Education Services -- Judy Roth
- Vancouver Social Planning Committee -- William Smiley
- Vancouver Society for Immigrant Women -- Katun Sadiqqi

Appendix B

Frequency of Reading in Punjabi and English, March 1990



Frequency scale: 1=never; 2=less than once per month;
3=once per month; 4=once per week; 5=three times per week;
6=daily.

A: letters and postcards
B: notes and cards
C: newspapers
D: magazines
E: TV and theater programs
F: recipes
G: flyers
H: advertisements
I: catalogues
J: directions
K: signs

L: forms
M: information pamphlets
N: notices
O: menus
P: price tags and tickets
Q: telephone books
R: dictionaries
S: poems and nursery rhymes
T: novels and stories
U: religious scriptures
V: children's books (read to kids)

Appendix C

Frequency of Writing in Punjabi and English, March 1990

Frequency scale: 1=never; 2=less than once per month; 3=once per month; 4=once per week; 5=three times per week; 6=daily.

Audience: U=universal; C=colleagues, family, friends; S=self

Formulaic Writing

U1: signatures
U2: slogans & notices
U3: forms
U4: notes & messages

C1: notes & messages
C2: postcards
C3: wall calendars

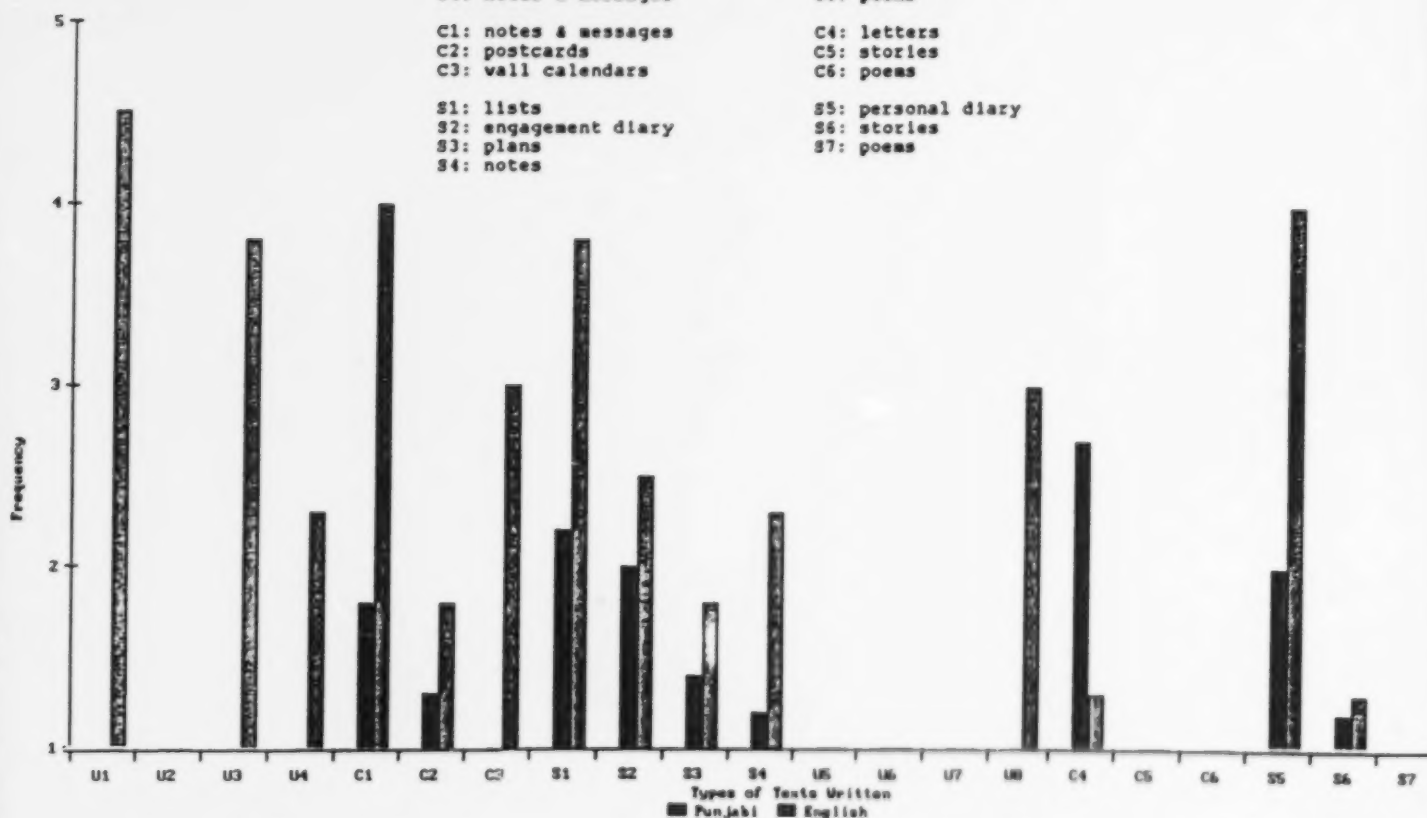
S1: lists
S2: engagement diary
S3: plans
S4: notes

Extended Texts

U5: letters
U6: newsletters
U7: reports
U8: poems

C4: letters
C5: stories
C6: poems

S5: personal diary
S6: stories
S7: poems



Appendix D

Frequency of English Literacy Uses at Beginning of Project, End of Project, and Four Months Later

Frequency scale: 1=never; 2=less than once per month;
3=once per month; 4=once per week; 5=three times per week;
6=daily.

Reading in English

R1: reading newspapers
R2: reading for information
R3: reading in one's spare time

Writing in English

W1: filling in basic forms
W2: writing in one's spare time

Community Uses of English

C1: using the library
C2: using the health unit
C3: taking telephone messages
C4: making phone calls
C5: interacting in children's school life
C6: daily routines
C7: shopping and banking

Home Uses of English

H1: reading mail
H2: studying English at home

